

*634 /323 cont./

554 of the legends has flown; the government of men has become a
178 serious and positive thing, and the montagnards well know that
791 for them the Iron Age has come.

792 Moreover, shorfa /shurfa/ and marabouts have diverted to
791 their advantage the current of popular forces that willingly
554 carries to the top rank the personages capable of entering into
178 relations with the hidden universe. Islam has obtained what it
[212] could utilize of the old beliefs; in our day it is the tolba, the
791 scholars, the saints, the descendants of the prophet, and not the
*634 amghars, who know the fearsome secrets and possess a mysterious
175 power. The true successors to the magician-kings -- if they have
791 ever existed /324/ in Berbère /Berber/ country -- would be,
792 rather, in the Moroccan South, the sons of Sidi Ahmed ou Mousa,
554 who for a long time exercised command of the tribes of the Igez-
zoulen, whose astonishing power Saignier described at the end of
the eighteenth century in these terms:

[431] "This man without troops at his orders," says he of the sherif
of the Tazerwalt, "is nevertheless the most powerful in all Africa;
his authority is limitless. If he orders war against the Emperor of
Morocco, he is obeyed; the war ceases when he wishes. Without
private possessions, he has all in his power. Each family gives
him a present every year; they exert themselves in the desire to
make it considerable. He renders justice to everyone; he submits
[692] the accusations to his council and, some days later, definitively
pronounces a verdict: he requires nothing of anybody, and every-
body gives to him" (1).

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1. Relation des voyages de Saignier /Account
of Saignier's Travels/, pp. 119, 120.

In the nineteenth century, up to the end of the reign of
Moulay el Hasan, Sidi Hicham and his son kept this tradition.
Inheritors of the royal power established by Sidi 'Ali, they pre-
served strange customs in their fortress of Illigh. Such a one is
that celebrated hunt each Saturday by the sherif, who, to please
[224] God, must kill the greatest possible number of wild animals; the
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great mouggar /fair/ of the Tazerwalt celebrated twice a year is, moreover, the scene of holy contests, in the course of which warriors sometimes die, whom Sidi Ahmed ou Mousa carries away into paradise.

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Thanks to the enormous prestige of their family, these marabouts were thus able to exercise a veritable sovereign power, and the most energetic of them, effortlessly concentrating religious and temporal authority at the same time, had "heads and hands cut off" as they liked (2).

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2. Relation of Sidi Brahîm de Massat /Account of Sidi Brahîm of Massat/, R. Basset trans., p. 14.

[571]

Natural arbitrators of the soffs, they thus held a royalty removed from the very manifest fragility of the Berbère /Berber/ tyrannies.

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Nevertheless, in our day the decline of these descendants of the Berbère /Berber/ kings of the seventeenth century is definitive. It is they themselves, in rallying to the Makhzen /makhzan/, who deserved to be attacked by popular indifference. Like many independent amghars of the Atlas, they lost all influence after one of them, Sidi Hosein, made himself the advisor of the sultan Moulay el Hasan in the Sous. In our day the successors of the autochthonous kings of the Sous humbly solicit from the Makhzen /makhzan/ the confirmation of their personal privileges /325/ and with difficulty manage to preserve at the tomb of their ancestor the cult that in former times was the glory of the Tazerwalt.

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If the tribes' confidence in the amghars endowed with the most venerated "baraka" of the South of Morocco is easily lost, one understands how it can abandon still more rapidly the temporal leaders, masters of small states conquered by violence. Having reached the degree of development that we have just studied, the amghar in fact strays more and more from the traditional milieu out of which he came; he feels attracted to the Makhzen /makhzan/, which gladly seeks to utilize his power for its ends, much more than he is tempted to remain, in the eyes of the people, the defender of the mountains' independence.